

Rocking the Boat in Four Stages

Task Zero:

Overall, the book presented some interesting insights into the interactions between employees and their superiors. The book laid out several scenarios where people's places of employment are not a good fit. Whether it be the inability to be flexible around family needs, being the minority group within the company, or a general lack of trust or common understanding about the direction the company is going. All of these lead to hostile situations internally for employees at one point or another and some boil to the surface if, in my opinion, it is a core value of yours. The book discusses how these moments where you might "butt heads" with your leadership, one makes a decision by putting priorities on the table and essentially choosing your battles. This was part of the book I would say I agreed most with. When interacting with the leadership within my school, I choose carefully what to confront and what to just conform to. Usually the confrontation stems from something that I am very passionate about, something that spent a lot of time on, or can provide some research and proof to back up my statement.

I must be honest; I didn't connect with this book like I thought I was going to when I read the synopsis while purchasing it. In my mind, I thought I was about to read a text that would help me orchestrate change within my school in the position I currently find myself. However, the perception I gather while reading this book was the intent for someone who has trouble with their leadership, and needs concrete ways to approach confrontation to effect change for themselves or their working environment. The reason I didn't connect with this text the way I had hoped, was because I don't find myself in a school where my principal is viewed as my boss: she is viewed as my mentor and she has created a culture in our school where teachers and their opinions are valued. The relationship that occurs is more of a partnership and therefore I do not find many instances where I would need to apply the ideas presented in this text.

Task One:

I can see how the "differences" discussed in this book could cause conflict in one's workplace, however this notion does not hold true for my situation. I work in a school where age, race, gender, etc. are not highlighted as differences. In some cases I find myself in the majority, for example gender, as do most women working in an elementary school. In other cases, I find myself in the minority, for example race. Our staff has a balanced mix of race, however our student body is predominately African American. This does present its challenges from time to time when discussing situations with parents and understanding my students' home life. However, when relating all of this to the interactions between my principal, and myself I do not ever feel the "differences" presented by Meyerson. And it most certainly does not present as an advantage or disadvantage to myself or any of my colleagues.

When reading the difference about values and beliefs and how that can play a role within a work place, it took me back to my second year of teaching. I know myself too well. When I am passionate about something because it is a value of mine, I will push, and communicate, and help others see my side. I do not shy away from confrontation. In my second year, it was my principal's first year. She had previously been our assistant principal so we were familiar with each other. Through that first year, there were times where we didn't always see eye to eye. Looking back at it, I realized it was the most essential time in our teacher-principal relationship. This was the time where we were learning each other's values in education and coming to a common ground. I feel as though that time is where I earned her respect. When we discussed differences, I had data to back up my opinions that always presented ways to benefit my students. We came to a consensus that we were both in it for the kids at the end of the day. Sometimes our passion gets in the way, but ultimately we want what's best for our students. I respect that year and what seemed bumpy at the times. I wouldn't want to be working for someone who didn't vet people working in our school, to make sure their philosophies aren't "fluff."

There is one difference I see within my school that tends to sometimes cause conflict and wasn't mentioned in the text and that is age and/or experience. This difference presents conflict in different ways. Sometimes newer, fresher is "better" with educators who are innovative and willing to better themselves verses their counterpart, veteran teacher who is "set in their ways." Other times, younger age plays a disadvantage in experience, dealing with certain situations, respect, and management. I have found myself on both ends of the spectrum. At first, I was the rookie, had to prove myself, and struggled with new situations. Now, being a seasoned educator, I continue to better my practice and use my skills developed over the years to support new teachers but stay innovative myself from learning from them.

Task Two:

After discussing this text with my fellow colleagues in this program, I was shocked to hear their situations and experiences within their school. I am in a unique situation. I interned at the school I still currently work at. Therefore, I only know my school, my principal's leadership style, and my school's culture. One of the reasons I strive to belong to professional groups, like the one established in this fellowship, is to learn about other schools. After hearing some testimonies from my fellow educators, I was so saddened by their frustrations and their perception of leadership. I honestly in that discussion could not relate, and had to be the minority voice to portray a school's culture that is equal and respectful among staff and leadership. At our break, I even called my principal to express my appreciation to her because I couldn't imagine working in a school that was described by some of the fellows.

I question if the fellows who expressed such frustration even have the hope that school exist with the leadership I described. When thinking about the spectrum laid out in the text, I definitely have built myself up to be on the right side. This however, did not happen over night. It took a combination of gaining my principal's

respect, developing my teaching philosophy, and understanding how to prioritize the change I wanted to see in my students, my school, and myself. Over the years I have grown into a leader myself. My principal takes pride in developing teacher leaders as she calls us. Through this process, I have established a seat at the table. I am a part of discussion and decisions that effect change in our school. I have proven my loyalty through my unwavering efforts for the betterment of our school and therefore, my principal values my ideas. It is an incredible position to be in and because of this, I have chosen to continue my path towards a leadership degree. I have an incredible mentor in my principal, and because of that I have developed my leadership skills and interactions with my colleagues to collectively effect change within my school.

I would say for those who find themselves in situations that differ from my own, to really prioritize your values within your school. Being able to understand what is most effective in making changes, and then understanding how your fellow colleagues and your leadership tend to respond to different approaches. I feel as though that is the best way to find a spot on the tempered radical spectrum. This book and how it outlines approaches to interactions reminded me of another book I read last summer titled, *The Five Love Languages*, by Gary Chapman. This book discusses how to figure out how you show and interpret people's "love" for you. There was a chapter in the book that discusses your relationships at work. After reading this book, I looked at my relationships with my fellow colleagues in a different light. For instances, If my teaching partner made copies for me, I knew her love language that she received in was with words of affirmation. Therefore, I knew to write her a thank you note verses reciprocating the gesture the following week by making copies for her class. I analyzed the majority of my relationships at work to help better understand how to show appreciation because I wanted my colleagues to feel that they were valued. Since reading that book, it has completely transformed my interactions at work. When reading this text, I was reminded of this revelation because I feel as though the tempered radical spectrum is very situational based on the employee and employer and the individual personalities.

Task Three:

I can relate to some of the challenges outlined in the text. First, I have experienced moments of ambivalence. Being a member of or Instructional Leadership Team, I have the task of conducting peer observations by going into teacher's rooms to observe, discuss, and help support their deficiencies. There have been times where this has been a love/hate relationship. I enjoy collaborating and supporting my colleagues, however this observation is not always well received and welcomed by some teachers. Some will view it as a time of judgment regardless of the way the system has been set up and communicated. Also, I have been accused of hypocrisy. When I make suggestions, I find myself questioning my fidelity with certain practices and strategies. The way I cope with this challenge is by creating a sense of trust and understanding. The sole purpose of these peer observations is to strengthen teaching and learning within our classrooms. By communicating that I am learning from them as much as they are learning from me helps build a trust.

Also, the ILT members invite people in to our classrooms first to show a sense of comfort and support in this process. That way, we are first the guinea pigs, which helps ease the sense of judgment by other staff members.

Another strain discussed in the book I tend to experience throughout a school year is the idea of burnout. I have never considered myself burned out and I am always finding ways to challenge myself instead of settling into my career and becoming too comfortable. However, there are times where I am extremely passionate about something that I want to see in our school or I want our students to experience and I am one of few who really want to attain this idea. First, what you need to understand is that our school is very small, only 16 teachers total. Because of this, we wear many hats at our school. So, I am primarily a 2nd grade teacher however I am also the technology coordinator, LSC teacher rep, a member of the ILT, a PBS coach, and the website manager (to name a few). What I involve myself in I am passionate about. But with all those titles, comes a lot of responsibility. That responsibility is both a blessing and a frustration at times. My principal has instilled a lot of trust in me and at times, even decision-making opportunities, but it tends to lead to a lot on my plate and the need to prioritize what impact is most important.

I always hold onto the notion that nothing worth having comes easy. I am committed to changing my school for the better by using the skills I have developed. At times, it brings frustration, which subsequently motivates me even further to achieve great things for our school. I know myself, and I wouldn't be satisfied working at my school from 8:30am-3:30pm in only my 2nd grade teacher role. I know priorities will change down the road as I create a family and have commitments where I will need to alter my work-life balance. Until then, I am going to continue to affect positive change in my school in any way I can.